



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515

January 26, 2007



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Help Protect Our Wild National Forests

COSPONSOR THE NATIONAL FOREST ROADLESS AREA CONSERVATION ACT

Dear Colleague:

As we begin the 110th Congress, we invite you to join us in a truly bi-partisan conservation measure by becoming an original cosponsor of the **National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2007**. This legislation will help to insure protection for wild areas of our National Forests and the vast wildlife, recreation and economic benefits they provide.

Roadless areas provide clean drinking water for over 60 million Americans; wildlife habitat for over 1,600 threatened, endangered or sensitive plant and animal species; endless recreational opportunities for millions of Americans, and other important ecological values. Additionally, protecting these roadless areas is fiscally responsible as it allows the Forest Service to address the estimated \$10 billion backlog in needed road maintenance instead of using taxpayer dollars to subsidize new roads. Under this balanced legislation, these pristine areas would be protected from most logging and road construction while allowing new roads in order to fight fires, maintain forest health and ensure public safety.

The 2001 roadless rule was the result of more than two decades of debate, and nearly 1.6 million public comments – more than any other federal rule in history – in favor of strong protections for these last wild places. The rule established a balance between environmental and economic concerns and thus served to tie together the nation's patchwork of local forest management practices and protect the remaining 58.5 million acres of unspoiled places from most logging, mining, and drilling interests.

In July 2004, the Bush Administration proposed a roll back of this vital conservation measure despite the overwhelming public support for protecting these natural treasures. Despite a public comment period in which over 1.2 million Americans wrote opposing the proposed repeal, in May of 2005, USDA Undersecretary Mark Rey officially repealed the 2001 roadless rule and replaced it with a process that solicited petitions from states (governors) to the federal government regarding the management of inventoried roadless areas in national forests in their states.

Due to a recent court decision that found its repeal of the 2001 rule to be illegal, the Administration's 2005 rule is no longer in effect. The district court has now reinstated the 2001 roadless rule, thus, with the exception of the Tongass National Forest, all of our country's national forest roadless areas currently enjoy the protection of the 2001 roadless rule.

While this legal victory presently affords protections for these public lands, their future is uncertain and they continue to be at risk. The administration continues to accept state petitions for exemption from the roadless rule under the APA, thus leaving protections vulnerable on a state-by-state basis. Therefore, we feel it is essential that we act to codify the 2001 roadless rule into law.

The fate of this country's last remaining wild forests is an issue of great importance for all Americans and has great ramifications for the nation's economy, scenery, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities, and quality of life. We urge you to join us and cosponsor the **National Forest Roadless Area Conservation Act of 2007** so we can protect these last remaining wild places for future generations to come.

To become an original cosponsor of this bill, or for more information, please contact Tracy Nagelbush in Rep. Inslee's office at x56311. Deadline to become an original cosponsor is February 5th, 2007.

Sincerely,



JAY INSLEE
Member of Congress



MARK KIRK
Member of Congress



MAURICE HINCHEY
Member of Congress



CHRISTOPHER SHAYS
Member of Congress



JIM RAMSTAD
Member of Congress



GEORGE MILLER
Member of Congress